



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE SEWANEE REVIEW.

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF LITERARY STUDIES.

VOL. VI.]

JULY, 1898.

[No. 3.]

THE ROMAN ELEGY.

THE elegiac couplet was used by Ennius and Lucilius for epigrams and satires; but to Catullus, the real father of Roman lyrical poetry, must be given the credit of first making effective use of it in truly personal verse.¹ The great successor and imitator of Sappho did not, however, bring it to such perfection as he attained in more strictly lyrical measures, and his distinguished follower, Horace, was both as a critic and as a poet averse to its use. Virgil chose for his part rather to perfect the hexameter, so that the development both of the elegiac couplet and of true elegiac poetry was left to a body of younger men who have since been known as the Roman elegists *par excellence*, Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid.

There were plain reasons why Catullus and Horace should not devote themselves to elegiac poetry. The nature of Catullus was too intense and passionate to be satisfied long with anything less than the most direct and vehement forms of melic poetry. He could, it is true, admire the Alexandrian elegists, especially Callimachus, whose "Lock of Berenice" he probably translated as we have seen, and he

¹Sellar remarks that the elegiac couplet was used by Q. Catulus and Valerius Aedituus early in the first century B.C., for "short erotic pieces," possibly in the vein of Meleager and the other contemporary Greek anthologists. ("Horace and the Elegiac Poets," p. 206.) Throughout this paper I rely largely on this admirable book.

certainly was much influenced by them, as M. Lafaye and other scholars have pointed out. Nevertheless his affinities were with the melic bards of early Greece rather than with the decadents of the court of the Ptolemies. Horace, on the other hand, had too much irony and humor in his composition either to write elegies or to tolerate them, and his genuine lyrical faculty (often underestimated) sent him back, like Catullus, to Sappho and Alcæus. Indeed, he had so little sympathy with the elegies his young countrymen were writing, in imitation of the Alexandrians, that he actually called the elegiac couplet *exiguus*, "trifling," and limited its functions to "the expression of sorrow and to inscriptions on votive offerings." ("Ars Poet.," 75.) And yet both he and Catullus could, on occasion, compose tender and touching lyrics of grief. Horace's lament for Quinctilius, beginning "*Quis desiderio*" (Carm., I., xxiv.) is exquisitely elegiac, and that he could strike chords proper to the love elegy is plain to any reader of the lovely "Eheu fugaces." (Carm., II., xiv.)¹ So, too, Catullus' brief poem on his brother's death (ci.) (his lines on the fate of Lesbia's sparrow have rather the intensity of the true ode than the pensive melancholy of the elegy) will live forever in the hearts of men:

Atque in perpetuom, frater, ave atque vale.

Certainly Cicero's idea that the verses of Euphron had corrupted the younger contemporaries of Catullus was not true with regard to the master himself. There was nothing effeminate about Catullus' passions, whether of love or hate, and although he could admire the "Lock of Berenice," he could also appreciate to the full the glory of Sappho. It was the disciple of Sappho rather than of Callimachus that thus lamented his brother: "Borne through many peoples and over many seas, O brother, I come to these sad funeral rites of thine, in order to bestow upon thee the last

¹ The beautiful ode to Valgius (Carm., II., ix.) on the loss of Mystes, is rather to be regarded as a bit of sensible advice given to an elegiac poet who was sighing himself away, than as a consolation ode proper, whether it be addressed to Tibullus or not. (Cf. Carm., I., xxxi.)

gifts belonging to the dead, and to apostrophize in vain thy silent ashes; since fortune has taken thee, even thee, away from me, O wretched brother, cruelly ravished away. . . . Now, nevertheless, do thou accept these sad funeral gifts, prescribed by primitive ancestral custom, well watered as they are by fraternal tears, and forever, O brother, hail and farewell!"

But, if the natures of Catullus and Horace were unpropitious to the cultivation of the elegiac Muse, that of the tender Virgil would seem to have been peculiarly apt. Yet we have hardly anything of his in the elegiac couplet, while only two pastoral elegies and a few pathetic lines in the "*Æneid*" warrant us in including his great name in our catalogue of the elegiac bards. The fact seems to be that just as Horace and Catullus were engaged in bringing to perfection the strictly lyrical measures, and just as Tibullus was soon to perform a similar service for the elegiac couplet, so Virgil bent his genius to the perfecting of the hexameter and to the development of idyllic and epic poetry. Like Catullus, he looked back both to the Alexandrians and to the bards of the elder Greece; but the poets whom he revered were Theocritus, Hesiod, and Homer. He could not escape the artificiality of imitation, but he could escape that of hybridism. Hence his elegies were of the Theocritean, not the Philetan, type, and hence it is that traces of their influence can be found in the work of no less a poet than Milton.

The two pastoral elegies of Virgil are the fifth and tenth of his *Eclogues*, entitled respectively "*Daphnis*" and "*Gallus*." That on *Daphnis*, while modeled on the first Idyl of Theocritus, is so unelaborate as hardly to require notice. That on *Gallus*, the elegiac poet, varies the Theocritean type in that there is only a single speaker and no refrain. (Cf. "*Lycidas*.") The source of Virgil's inspiration is, however, plain enough from these lines:

What groves, or what meadows held you, O maiden Naiades, when Gallus perished through cruel love; for neither did the ridges of Parnassus cause you delay, nor any of Pindus, nor did Aonian Aganippe. (X., 9-12.)

In the verses which describe Apollo as coming and asking, "Gallus, what hath maddened thee?" we have an even more palpable imitation of Theocritus, and as we have already described the Alexandrian pastorals at length, we can afford to say no more even about a poet so ever memorable for his style as Virgil. We must, however, recall at least one passage of the "*Æneid*" (VI., 883-884), the famous lines on Marcellus:

"Alas! thou youth to be lamented; if in any way thou burst the cruel bonds of fate, thou wilt be Marcellus. Give lilies with full hands."¹

We may now pass from the seminaturalization of the Alexandrian pastoral—Virgil seems not to have been imitated as a pastoral poet until the time of Nero by Calpurnius and a few others—to the full naturalization of the Alexandrian elegy. There was reason for the success of this latter naturalization. As in Alexandria with relation to classic Greece, so in Augustan Rome, material civilization and culture and luxury had superseded the pristine simplicity and virtue that had made the city eternal. A tyrant—disguised, it is true, but still a tyrant—had come, and men were cut off from political activity. They betook themselves to intrigues and debaucheries. The camp was exchanged for the boudoir, the laurel for the rose-leaf. Nearly every noted man had his mistress, who was too frequently the wife of another. Gallantry was the business of the hour, and gallantry and amatory poetry have always gone hand in hand. If the Roman gentleman of worth and breeding did not write a woful ballad on his mistress' eyebrow, he could, nevertheless, address her a woful elegy when he found, as was nearly always the case, that he did not share her favors alone. In a court at which the emperor's own daughter outvied in her shamelessness that Lesbia of whom Catullus complained that

Nunc in quadriviis et angiportis
Glubit magnanimos Remi nepotes,

the "*Amores*" and the "*Ars Amandi*" were likely to be favorite reading.

¹ Heu, miserande puer! si qua fata aspera rumpas,
Tu Marcellus eris. Manibus date lilia plenis —.

The soil being ready then for the growth of amatory poetry, and the Alexandrian love elegists having become fully known to the literary world of Rome, it is no wonder that a school of typical elegists was not long in making its appearance. The Alexandrians following Antimachus had often celebrated a real or supposititious passion with all the affectations of learning and the refinements of art; the Roman *jeunesse dorée* could furnish passions by the wholesale, and a few of its best representatives could supply in addition the necessary culture and poetical inspiration. Of the contemporaries of Catullus, not a few able men wrote more or less wanton verses, Ticius, Memmius, Cinna, Anser, Cornificius, Varro Attacinus (who wrote of his mistress Leucadia), and the rest, of whom Ovid speaks with some contempt. ("Tristia," II., 429 ff.) Their verses have perished save a few fragments, and this is likewise true of the poems of the orator Licinius Calvus, who seems to have written a genuine elegy on the premature death of a certain Quintilia. All these poets doubtless imitated the Alexandrians more or less, but they were in all likelihood coarser than their models. It remained for four younger men to rival, probably to surpass, Philetas, Callimachus, and Hermesianax in grace and elegance of sentiment and expression; and of these four, fortune has been kind to the work of three.

Our typical Roman elegists (Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid) were all young men of good family and decent means. They had no political or military ambition, they were above business, they did not care to use their poetic powers as Virgil and Horace had done to glorify the new régime; they wanted to enjoy their love affairs and write tender poetry, and they did both. Their art was subjective, the minister of their pleasures. Epics, tragedies, even satires were foreign to their tastes and powers, and they were true if not supreme artists, in that they recognized their own limitations. Perhaps, too, now that women had gained their freedom, and formed a large part of the reading circles, they were worldly-wise in their choice of theme and method.¹

¹ This and the following paragraph are based entirely on Sellars.

With regard now to the chief aim of the new poetry, we are bound to agree with Professor Sellar that it was "to act on the tender emotions by the luxurious softness of its melody, or to quicken the spirit of gaiety by its brilliance and vivacity." It was able to assimilate all the improvements in diction and rhythm wrought by the older poets and to add graces of its own. "The result is, with Ovid and Tibullus, the most popular representatives of the Roman elegy, a facility, a lucidity of language, an unimpeded smoothness of rhythm, and, in the case of Ovid, a rapidity of movement, unequaled in any other branch of Roman poetry. The aim of the art of Tibullus and Ovid is to produce as little sense of effort as possible. Propertius, indeed, has imparted a different movement to his verse, suited to the deeper, more powerful, and more turbid movement of his own feelings, and the more thoughtful workmanship and recondite suggestiveness of his imagination. But his style is exceptional and peculiar to himself. The true character assumed by the Latin elegy, in ancient times and in its modern imitations, is the liquid smoothness of Tibullus or the buoyant and sparkling rapidity of Ovid."

Now all this is admirably put, and I should not be presumptuous enough to gainsay a word of it, yet there is an important point in connection with these poets which, while it did not escape Professor Sellar's attention, has not, I think, been treated by him in an entirely satisfactory manner. Propertius opens the first elegy of his fourth book with the following verses, in which he makes a distinct claim that must be reckoned with: "O shade of Callimachus and sacred rites of Coan Philetas, suffer me, I pray, to enter into your grove. I am the first priest entering to introduce Italian mystic rites, drawn from a pure source, among the Greek choruses."

In other words, Propertius claims that he is the first Roman who really wrote elegies like the Alexandrians. Now this can hardly mean, as has been held, that he was merely the first professed imitator of the Alexandrians. Such a claim, even in view of Catullus alone, would have exposed

Propertius to laughter. The inspiration of all the other elegists was plainly Alexandrian, and whether they confessed the fact or not was a small matter. But if Propertius meant, as he probably did, that he was the first Roman that had written elegies in strict accordance with Alexandrian canons, he made an important claim that warrants consideration. Was it a mere boast or was it based on fact? I am inclined to think that Propertius spoke nothing but the literal truth.

He was in all probability the first Roman to undertake to fuse elegy and ode as the Alexandrians had done, the first to make full and copious use of mythology and legend in order to introduce the epic notes so frequently struck by his models. With regard to the latter point one has but to compare a few elegies of Tibullus with an equal number of Propertius in order to see how much more mythology and legend enter into the warp and woof of the latter poet's work than into that of the former. A similar comparison will show that one could hardly at any time long believe that Tibullus was writing an ode instead of a plaintive elegy, while such a mistake might constantly be made with regard to Propertius. If this contention be well taken, it is obvious, not only that Propertius was justified in his claim to be the first Roman poet to enter the Alexandrian grove but that many of the peculiarities of his style that have given critics grave concern are readily explained. Turgidity and reconditeness were almost necessary accompaniments of a successfully imitated Alexandrian style, nor need we consider Propertius less of a genius for having subjected himself so strictly to foreign domination. The elegy of Philetas and Callimachus, though a hybrid, tempted any poet with a glittering prize—the wreath of Pindar. We know now that hybrid art is attended with insuperable dangers, and Horace himself pointed out the folly of endeavoring to imitate the greatest of the ancient lyrists; but imitation was in the air, and Propertius' powerful nature probably made him feel that it would be better to err with Callimachus in keeping Pindar in sight

than to shine with Tibullus in lamenting tenderly the infidelities of a fickle mistress.¹

It is time, however, to say something about the elegists themselves, and to discuss their work more in detail. At the very outset of the inquiry our knowledge of literary conditions at Rome naturally makes us look for the man who played a part for them similar to that played by Mæcenas for Horace and Virgil. Mæcenas had been Augustus' friend, and hence the poetry of Horace and Virgil had sought to develop a new patriotism in the interest of the emperor. We should suspect that the patron of the younger poets would be a man not in full touch with the new régime. And so it was; for Messalla, the friend of Tibullus and Ovid, held somewhat aloof from the empire.² He was a gifted man in every way, a patriot, yet trusted and employed by the emperor, whom, however, he never flattered. His house was a resort of poets and scholars, and that it was free the love story of his niece, Sulpicia, plainly proves—herself a poetess whose love elegies for Cerinthus have come down to us.³

Probably the earliest of our individual elegists, Cornelius Gallus, did not need a patron for his verses, although he certainly needed one of another sort later in his career. He was born in 69 B.C., was much distinguished as a soldier under Augustus, being made first Prefect of Egypt, but finally he fell into disgrace and committed suicide in 26 B.C.

¹ It is perfectly true, as Sellar observes, that we have very little of the Alexandrian elegiac poetry extant, and that hence our inferences are liable to be erroneous. But from the fragments remaining, from references in the works of other authors, from the translation of the "Coma Berenices," and from Propertius' own works, if we assume him to have been telling the truth in Elegy IV., i., we can certainly gather a good deal of information not easily to be shaken. Sellar's point, by the way, that Propertius probably imitated the Alexandrians in arranging his poems carefully "so as to produce the impression of an artistic whole," is seemingly well taken, and the reader may be referred to his excellent analyses of the arrangement of the poet's various books. (*Hor. and the El. Poets*, chap. iv., early pages.)

² Mæcenas appears to have patronized Propertius, who stands somewhat aloof from Tibullus and the Messalla group.

³ For these and subsequent biographical details I am indebted chiefly to Sellar.

His elegies, all of which are lost, were in four books entitled "Lycoris." In these he mourned his desertion by Cytheris, a famous actress, the mistress of Anthony and others. From the impression he produced on his contemporaries and successors,¹ it is clear that he must have written with great distinction, and he has at least the credit of having been the forerunner of Tibullus and Propertius, and of having been lamented by Virgil.²

Albius Tibullus was a good deal younger than Gallus, but his date of birth is uncertain. It may be set down as about 54 B.C. He was of good family and had some property, but he met with losses in the civil wars. In 30 or 29 B.C. he served with Messalla in Aquitania and gained distinction. Returning to Italy, he won the love of Plania, whom he made famous under the name of "Delia" in the first book of his elegies. These exquisite love poems tell the story of his passion—how he has to go to the East with Messalla, how he falls ill, how he hastens home to his mistress. The four lines from the third elegy in which he describes in anticipation his unexpected return have hardly their equal for vivid description in all literature.³

"Then I shall come quickly and no one shall announce me, but I shall seem to be before thee as though dropped from heaven; then do thou, O Delia, run toward me in thy bare feet, just as thou art found, with thy long locks all disheveled."⁴

We need not follow the intrigue to its logical conclusion. Several years later he wrote a second book, which he probably did not live to revise. He has been living quietly on

¹ Quintilian thought his style "durior" as compared with that of his rivals.

² Virgil also praises him in *Ec.* vi. From *Ec.* x. it seems that Gallus translated some work of Euphorion.

³ "There are few passages in ancient poetry so perfect as a picture from life and an expression of feeling." (Sellar, loc. cit., p. 235.)

⁴ Tunc veniam subito nec quisquam nuntiet ante,
Sed videar caelo, missus adesse tibi:
Tunc mihi, qualis e ris, longos turbata capillos,
Obvia nudato, Delia, curre pede.

his estates, but has again become the bondsman of love—this time to a certain “Nemesis,” who nearly ruins him. We may doubt whether Ovid was entirely correct in representing the two mistresses as joining their kisses over the poet’s funeral pile, but we can hardly doubt the violence of the passion they both inspired and shared.

Of the grace and melody of Tibullus’ elegies enough has already been said; of their subject-matter perhaps the following quotations will give a fair idea. In the first elegy of the first book, in which he declines Messalla’s invitation to the wars (B.C. 31?) he declares (ll. 53–62): “It is fitting for thee, O Messalla, to make war by land and sea, that thy mansion may exhibit the spoils of the foe; me the chains of a comely girl retain as a captive, and I sit, like a porter, before her obdurate door. I do not care to be lauded, O my Delia: provided I am with thee, I prefer to be called slow and inert. Let me look upon thee when my last hour is come, let me, dying, hold thee with my failing hand. Thou wilt weep me when I am placed upon my bed, soon to burn, and wilt give me kisses mixed with sad tears.”¹

The dominant notes of this passage are, of course, the sacrifice of ambition to love, which reaches perhaps its highest elegiac expression in Tibullus, just as it does its highest tragic expression in Shakspeare’s “Antony and Cleopatra,” and the rather morbid stressing of death-bed incidents for which Tibullus is conspicuous among classical poets.²

The gentle longing of the poet for rural quiet and pleas-

¹ Te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique,
 Ut domus hostiles praeferat exuvias:
 Me retinent victum formosae vincla puellae,
 Et sedeo duras janitor ante fores.
 Non ego laudari curo, mea Delia: tecum
 Dum modo sim, quaeso segnis inersque vocer.
 Te spectem suprema mihi cum venerit hora,
 Te teneam moriens deficiente manu.
 Flebis et arsuro positum me, Delia, lecto
 Tristibus et lacrimis oscula mixta dabis.

² Mr. Sellar thinks, however, that Propertius does more brooding on death.

ures is well expressed in these few verses (I., v., 21-24):
“ I shall cultivate my fields, and my Delia will be with me
as the keeper of my stores, while the threshing-floor treads
the harvests under the hot sun, or she will keep my grapes
in full baskets, and my pure must pressed with an active
foot.”¹

Space is wanting for anything like a careful analysis of the various elegies, or even for giving a complete list of the subjects treated. These vary from a triumphal, almost ode-like, outburst on Messalla's return after his victory over the Aquitani, to an expostulation with a coquette who has trifled with one of the poet's friends. As for the passages that portray the licentiousness of the times, it will suffice to say that while they are fairly numerous and certainly characteristic, they need not be dwelt on here. It may be well, however, to transcribe one such which shall be left in the original Latin, with genders unchanged:

Huic tamen accubuit noster puer: hunc ego credam
Cum trucibus Venerem iungere posse feris
Blanditiasne meas aliis tu vendere es ausus?
Tunc aliis demens oscula ferre mea?
Tum flebis, cum me vinctum puer alter habebit
Et geret in regno regna superba tuo.
At tua tum me pœna iuvet, Venerique merenti
Fixa notet casus aurea palma meos.
Hanc tibi fallaci resolutus amore Tibullus
Dedicat et grata sis, dea, mente rogat.

Before taking final leave of this artistic and fastidious poet, who without Gray's learning and moral worth, has been compared with our own chief elegist, we must note the fact that among the elegies once attributed to Tibullus several have been included which are certainly not from his pen. Eleven of these tell the pretty story of the love of Sulpicia, Messalla's niece, for Cerinthus; all are marked by grace and sincerity, especially that (IV., viii.) in which

¹ Rura colam, frugumque aderit mea Delia custos,
Area dum messes sole calente teret,
Aut mihi servabit plenis in lintribus uvas
Pressaque veloci candida musta pede.

the girl complains that her own or some one else's birthday having come around, she must quit the city for the country, and so be separated from her lover. Messalla may force her away, but "carried hence, I still leave here my mind and my feelings, since thou dost not let me have my own free will."¹

This breath of pure, true love is distinctly refreshing when compared either with the unhealthy passion of Tibullus himself or with the artificial sentiment manifested by the writer of six of these intruding elegies, a certain Lygdamus, perhaps a fictitious name, who celebrated his mistress Neæra in delicate but unoriginal verse.²

The third writer of our group, Propertius, is by far the most interesting, although it is only of late that he has received the praise that is his due. He is now ranked by some critics with the greatest of the Roman poets. The chronology of his life is very confused, but it may be set down as ranging between the dates 48 and 16 B.C. The two main facts of his life are his love for Hostia, whom he celebrated as Cynthia, and his devotion to his art. His elegies are divided into four books, the first of which is famous as the "Cynthia Monobiblos." For genuine passion, for vivid imagination, for originality and power of diction, and for sympathy with nature, he is unique among the poets of his time, but he fails of his true place through his inability to harmonize his powers, which in turn was probably due to the hybrid nature of the art he practised. Enough has, however, been said on this point, and it only remains for us to select certain characteristic passages from the love elegies, and to describe briefly his two genuine elegies of grief. Here are some tender elegiac lines and a characteristic legendary illustration from the nineteenth elegy of the first book: "I do not now, my Cynthia, fear the sad Manes,

¹ Hic animum sensusque meos abducta relinquo,
Arbitrio quoniam non sinis esse meo.

² One other so-called elegy is an anonymous panegyric of Messalla in hexameters. It is evident that all the elegies were grouped together through the connection of the various writers with the house of Messalla.

nor do I care for the fates due to the last funeral pyre, but I dread that perchance thy love may be wanting at my death-bed; this fear is harder to be borne than death itself. The boy, Love, has not clung so lightly to my eyes that my dust may ever be oblivious to the passion. There below, in the blind precincts of Hades, the hero sprung from Phylacus [Protesilaus] could not be unmindful of his comely spouse, but longing to embrace his joys in his insubstantial hands, he came, a Thessalian shade, to his ancient home."¹

The lines that follow form a complete elegy of great beauty and pathos (III., ii.), though perhaps some verses have been lost: "Others may write of thee, or thou mayest remain unknown: let him praise thee who is wont to sow his seeds in sterile soil. The dark day of thy last funeral rites, believe me, will carry off all thy accomplishments in one bier; and the scornful traveler will pass by thy remains and will not say: 'This dust was once a learned maid.'"²

Among the finest of Propertius' elegies may be mentioned the epistle of Arethusa to Lycotas (IV., vi.), and the speech of Cornelia's spirit (IV., xi.). The elegies on Roman myths and gods, like that on Vertumnus (IV., ii.), are his worst. The strict elegies of grief are those on Pætus (IV., vii.) and Marcellus, him honored by Virgil (IV., xviii.). The latter is more or less the appropriate tribute of a well-

¹ Non ego nunc tristes vereor, mea Cynthia, Manes,
Nec moror extremo debita fata rogo;
Sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore,
Hic timor est ipsis durior exequiis.
Non adeo leviter nostris puer hæsit ocellis,
Ut meus oblito pulvis amore vacet.
Illic Phylacides iocundæ coniugis heros
Non potuit cæcis inmemor esse locis,
Sed cupidus falsis attingere gaudia palmis
Thessalis antiquam venerat umbra domum.

² Scribant de te alii vel sis ignota licebit:
Laudet, qui sterili semina ponit humo.
Omnia, crede mihi, secum uno munera lecto
Auferet extremi funeris atra dies.
Et tua transibit contemnens ossa viator,
Nec dicet "cinis hic docta puella fuit.

known poet to a great public character; it therefore needs little comment. The former is a much more sincere lament for a young friend drowned on a voyage to Egypt. It opens with a denunciation of the love of gain, which causes so many anxious lives, and has sunk "three or four times in the raging sea Pætus, who was spreading his sails toward Pharian harbors." It continues with gloomy pessimism to ask why, when he was tossing on the waters, the name of his dear mother was on his lips, seeing that the billows have no gods—*non habet unda deos*. Then follows the customary appeal to legend, this time to the story that Agamemnon would not let the Greek fleet start on account of the drowning of the beautiful youth Argynneus, near the very spot where Pætus perished. The landsman's horror of ships is next introduced, and with it the personal note, somewhat unmanly, be it confessed: "But if he were contentedly turning up his fields with his inherited oxen, and had thought my words of weight, he would be living, a welcome guest, among his own Penates, poor indeed, but on land, where no ill gusts can blow."¹

After this we are given a grimly realistic picture of the youth's death, no such artistic reticence as Milton displays in "Lycidas" hampering Propertius: "From him yet alive the surge tore off his nails by the roots and his wretched gasping drew in the hateful water: unpitying night saw him borne on clinging to a slender plank. So many evils coincided that Pætus might die."²

We may omit the hopeless speech of Pætus himself, "when the black water was closing his dying mouth,"

Cum moribunda niger clauderet ora liquor,

¹ Quod si contentus patrio bove verteret agros,
Verbaque duxisset pondus habere mea,
Viveret ante suos dulcis conviva Penates,
Pauper, at in terra, nil ubi flare potest.

² Huic fluctus vivo radicitus abstulit ungues,
Et miser invisam traxit hiatus aquam:
Hunc parvo ferri vidit nox improba ligno
Pætus ut occideret, tot coiere mala.

although it may be well to compare it with the radiant triumph manifest in the closing lines of "Lycidas;" and we find ourselves echoing the exquisitely pathetic regret of Propertius: "O ye hundred ocean daughters of father Nereus, and thou Thetis, touched by a mother's grief, ye should have put your arms under his tired chin; he could not have weighed heavy on your hands."¹

But Pætus' fate shall not be his own, says our poet, in conclusion; the savage north wind shall never see his sails; but he will be fitly stowed away, when lifeless, before the door of his mistress.

This strong and sincere elegy has been compared—and naturally, as we have seen—with "Lycidas," but Milton is too far removed from the pagan pessimism of Propertius to make the comparison valuable from a strictly literary point of view. It is best for our purposes to compare it with Moschus' "Elegy on Bion." This done, we shall see at once that, in spite of the strength and sincerity of the simpler elegy, it has not the appeal to the emotions produced by the exquisite artistic elaboration of the Ausonian singer's pastoral dirge. Moschus, in veiling his grief under artistic conventions, has really heightened its intensive effect, and he has been able to give to his verses a charm and grace which Propertius could not attain with all his realism and all his pessimistic strength, attractive though both may be to some modern minds.²

Of so well known a poet as Ovid, whose chief success was won in other realms of art than those haunted by the Muse of Elegy, there is naturally little that we need say here. His "Tristia" are nominally elegies, but are rather personal ejaculations and expostulations than anything else,

¹ O centum æquoreæ Nereo genitore puellæ,
Et tu materno tacta dolore Theti
(Vos decuit lasso supponere bracchia mento.
Non poterat vestras ille gravare manus.)

² It may be well to remark that Moschus was, as we have previously seen, a sincere pessimist, but that in this particular also his grace does not interfere with his producing the impression of sincerity.

although they do contain some important information about Roman amatory poetry, which we have already drawn on. His "Amores" are three books of love elegies in the manner of Tibullus and Propertius, but they have so little of the necessary "querimonia," so little real passion, that it is doubtful to this day whether the Corinna they celebrate was a real person or not. My own impression, derived merely from reading the poems rapidly, is that she was as intangible as the mistress of Abraham Cowley. Of course, with his facility and irony and lightness of touch, Ovid managed to make his elegies readable for all their artificiality, but there is certainly no need to quote from them here, save in the case of two. One of these is a really tender, melodious lament for the untimely death of Tibullus, who was also, by the way, honored by a good epigram by Domitius Marsus. This elegy (III., ix.), which we have already referred to, although not pastoral, shows plain traces of Alexandrian influence, but is nevertheless a sincere tribute of one poet to another. It is not nearly so realistic as the elegy on Pætus, nor is it so great a poem, but it has a charm which that lacks. Perhaps as quotable a passage as any is the following: "And yet we are called 'sacred bards,' and are said to be the objects of the gods' care; there are some people, too, who believe us to be inspired. Forsooth, importunate death profanes all that is sacred, upon all things she lays her dusky hands."¹

The conclusion may be quoted as being more hopeful than that of the elegy on Pætus, and as giving Tibullus his proper rank among elegiac poets: "If, however, anything beside name and shadow remain of us, Tibullus will live in the vale of Elysium. Do thou, O learned Catullus, with thy youthful brows bound with ivy, come to meet him in company with thy Calvus. And thou, too, if the imputed crime of the daring friend is false, O Gallus, prodigal of thy

¹At sacri vates, et divûm cura vocamur:

Sunt etiam, qui nos numen habere putent.

Scilicet omne sacrum Mors importuna profanat:

Omnibus obscuras iniicit illa manus.

blood and life. To these thy shade is a companion, if indeed the body has any shade surviving. Thou hast swelled, O cultured Tibullus, the number of the elect. Rest quiet, O ye his bones, I pray, in a safe urn, and to thy ashes, Tibullus, may the earth not prove heavy.”¹

The second of Ovid’s elegies that we need to notice is his really pathetic and graceful lament for Corinna’s parrot, “the imitative bird from the Indies of the East.” Here, too, Alexandrian touches are not wanting, as, for example, in the opening lines where the other birds are bidden to the parrot’s funeral, and are told to “tear their rough feathers in place of their sorrowing hair.” As a matter of course, the intensity of passion and the matchless charm of Catullus’ ode on Lesbia’s sparrow are absent from Ovid’s poem, nor could we well look for the playful humor that afterward characterized Cowper’s animal elegies, or the thoughtful pessimism that marked Matthew Arnold’s, but the verses are nevertheless worthy of remembrance, far more so than the separate elegy entitled “Nux,” the walnut-tree, once attributed to Ovid, in which the tree complains of being pelted by the passers-by.

But with Ovid we may bring our sketch of the Roman elegy to a close. Were we endeavoring to give a complete account of its evolution and development, we should have to devote some space to the long and not ineffective “Consolation to Livia Augusta on the death of her son Drusus” —which was once attributed to Ovid, and which is the most elaborate poem we have yet encountered of its happily defunct, or nearly defunct kind. We should also have to say

¹ Si tamen e nobis aliquid, nisi nomen et umbra,
Restat, in Elysia valle Tibullus erit.
Obvius huic venias, hedera juvenilia cinctus
Tempora, cum Calvo, docte Catulle, tuo.
Tu quoque, si falsum est temerati crimen amici,
Sanguinis atque animæ prodige, Galle, tuæ.
His comes umbra tua est; si quid modo corporis umbra est.
Auxisti numeros, cultus Tibulle, pios.
Ossa quieta, precor, tuta requiescite in urna,
Et sit humus cineri non onerosa tuo.

something about two anonymous elegies in honor of Mæcenas, about several epitaphs and epigrams upon the younger Cato, including some by Seneca, whose few verses upon Crispus are, by the way, very touching; about many epitaphs and elegies by minor or unknown poets collected in the *Anthologia Latina*,¹ about such elegies as those of Statius, on the parrot of Atedius Melior, a good piece of *vers de société*—on the serving boy of Flavius Ursus, on Claudius the Etruscan, on his own father—a sincere, but not specially moving tribute—and on his boy attendant; as well as those of Ausonius on his father and other relatives—in short, we should find that between Ovid and Boethius enough elegiac poetry was written to furnish a diligent commentator with abundant material for a lengthy disquisition. We are not concerned with it, however, except in so far as it affected the elegists of the Middle Ages who will occupy us later. Here we need only stress the fact that the four chief forms of Greek elegy—the simple poem of grief, the political and gnomic elegy, the love elegy, and the pastoral elegy—all passed into Roman literature, but that with the exception of a few fine specimens of the first class, such as Catullus' lines on his brother, and the elegies of Propertius and Ovid on Pætus and Tibullus respectively, the Romans succeeded conspicuously only in the elegies of the third class—those devoted to love. Of their masters of love elegy only one (Propertius) was, so far as we can judge, a strict adherent to Alexandrian canons, Tibullus returning rather to the pensive sweetness of Mimnermus,² and Ovid being obviously more artificial than most of his predecessors had been. The future lay with Tibullus and Ovid, rather than with Propertius, because when the men of the Renaissance came to imitate the Roman elegists they were naturally more attracted by the melody and straightforward sincerity of passion of Tibullus, or by the smooth-flowing *tours de force* of Ovid than by the turbid, badly fused, but nevertheless as-

¹ Some of these will be treated in the chapter on the "Medieval Elegy."

² This point, which occurred to me independently, has, I find from Sellar, been made by Gruppe and M. Plessis.

piring art of Propertius. In a more or less artificial genre imitators were likely to take the paths of least resistance—and these lay toward Tibullus and Ovid, and away from Propertius, the greatest of all the ancient love elegists, in my judgment, save only Mimnermus.¹

W. P. TRENT.

¹In connection with the comparative neglect of Propertius by former generations I have wondered whether Goldsmith, when in the twentieth chapter of the "Vicar of Wakefield" he introduced the rascally author who proposed to get out a new edition of Propertius, chose that poet because he wished to indicate that in his opinion there was no need of paying such attention to his works. The company in which he puts the great Roman suggests the inference, and I find nothing in the rest of his works to refute it. He mentions Tibullus and Ovid, the former at the latter's expense; but seems to be silent about Propertius. (See Essay XII.)